

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follow:

Claim 1-59 (Canceled).

60. (Previously Presented) A method for dispensing medication comprising:

filling a prescription by placing information unique to a single patient on a container of medication;

utilizing an automated medication dispenser, the dispenser being located in a pharmacy such that a first side of the dispenser is accessible by a pharmacy worker and such that a second side of the dispenser is accessible to the public, the dispenser having a plurality of receptacles configured for receiving filled prescriptions and having a control portion configured for operating the dispenser;

loading the filled prescription into one of the plurality of receptacles through the first side of the dispenser;

storing information associated with the single patient sufficient to identify the single patient electronically in the controller;

storing the location of the filled prescription within the dispenser via the control portion;

associating the location of the filled prescription with the information associated with the single patient in the controller;

providing access to the second side of the dispenser so as to allow a customer to input information associated with the single patient into the controller;

dispensing the prescription to the customer once the information associated with the single patient has been entered.

61. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 60, wherein the method comprises:

filling a plurality of prescriptions for a plurality of patients by placing information unique to each of the patients on one or more containers of medication corresponding to the particular patient's prescription or prescriptions;

loading the plurality of filled prescriptions into the plurality of receptacles, and storing electronically, via a control portion, information regarding the filled prescriptions;

storing electronically, via ~~a~~ the control portion, information corresponding to the plurality of patients and sufficient to identify each of the plurality of patients;

storing the locations within the dispenser of each of the plurality of filled prescriptions in the control portion;

associating the locations of each of the plurality of filled prescriptions with the information corresponding to the particular patient which corresponds to the particular prescription in the control portion;

providing public access to the second side of the dispenser so as to allow a customer to input information associated with a patient into the controller;

dispensing to the customer the filled prescription or prescriptions corresponding to a patient once information sufficient to identify the patient has been entered.

62. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, wherein the method further comprises selecting a medication dispenser which is disposed in a pharmacy wall.

63. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, wherein the first side of the medication dispenser is disposed opposite the second side of the dispenser.

64. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, wherein the second side of the dispenser has an opening configured for selectively allowing a customer to retrieve at least one prescription.

65. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, wherein the method further comprises opening one of a plurality of doors to provide access to the filled prescription.

66. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, wherein the method further comprises providing counseling regarding the prescription to the customer via the automated dispenser.

67. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, wherein the method further comprises collecting payment from the customer for the prescription.

68. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 60, wherein the method further comprises automatically billing an insurance provider for the prescription at the time of sale.

69. (Previously Presented) A method for dispensing prescriptions comprising:

transmitting at least one prescription for medication to a pharmacist;

filling the at least one prescription by preparing a container of medication bearing information specific to an identified patient;

utilizing an automated prescription dispensing machine, the machine having a plurality of receptacles configured for receiving filled prescriptions comprising labeled containers of medication and having a control portion configured for controlling the dispensing of the filled prescriptions from the machine;

loading the at least one filled prescription into one of the plurality of receptacles;

entering the location of the at least one filled prescription, patient information, and prescription information into the control portion;

providing means whereby a customer may enter information;

automatically verifying the prescription with the customer after the customer enters sufficient information to confirm the identity of a patient; and

dispensing at least one of the at least one filled prescriptions to the customer after verification of the prescription.

70. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 69, wherein the method further comprises:

transmitting a plurality of prescriptions for medication to a pharmacist;

filling a plurality of prescriptions;

loading each of the plurality of filled prescriptions into receptacles of the plurality of receptacles;

entering for each of the plurality of filled prescriptions the location of the filled prescription and patient information; and

dispensing to a customer one or more of the plurality of filled prescriptions corresponding to a single patient in response to the entry of information sufficient to identify the patient into the dispenser.

71. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 69, wherein the method further comprises charging the customer for the dispensed filled prescription.

72. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 69, wherein the dispensing machine is located in a pharmacy wall.

73. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 69, wherein the method further comprises having pharmacy staff load the filled prescription into the dispensing machine.

74. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 69, wherein the method further comprises allowing customers to receive prescriptions from the dispensing machine after the pharmacy is closed.

75. (Previously Presented) A method for dispensing prescription medication comprising:

receiving a plurality of written or electronic prescriptions for medication corresponding to a plurality of different patients at a pharmacy;

filling the plurality of prescriptions by preparing containers of medication having information specific to an identified patient thereon;

utilizing an automated medication dispenser which is accessible to the public, the dispenser having a plurality of receptacles configured for receiving a plurality of filled prescriptions, and having a control portion for controlling the dispensing of medication from the dispenser;

loading the plurality of filled prescriptions in the plurality of receptacles;

entering the location of each of the plurality of filled prescriptions and information associated with each patient of the plurality of different patients into the control portion;

correlating the location of each of the plurality of filled prescriptions to the information entered for the corresponding patient;

receiving at least two pieces of information from a customer and verifying whether the information entered properly identifies a patient corresponding to a filled prescription which is stored in the dispenser; and

dispensing a filled prescription from the dispenser in response to entry of information by a customer which corresponds to that prescription and to the patient.

76. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 75, wherein then method further comprises charging the customer for at least a part of the cost of the prescription.

77. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 75, wherein the method further comprises automatically billing an insurance company for at least a part of the prescription, at the time of sale.

78. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 75, wherein method comprises dispensing the filled prescription via an opening so that it is accessible by the customer.

79. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 75, wherein the method further comprises providing a plurality of doors in communication with the plurality of receptacles and selectively

actuating one of the plurality of doors after the patient enters sufficient information to identify the patient.

80. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 75, wherein the method further comprises selectively releasing from one of the plurality of receptacles a filled prescription corresponding to a customer after the customer enters information sufficient to identify and provide authorization of a patient so as to allow the customer to retrieve the prescription.

81. (Previously Presented) A method for dispensing filled prescriptions, the method comprising:
filling a prescription by preparing a container of medication with a label bearing patient information;

loading the filled prescription into an automated prescription dispensing system disposed so as to be accessible from both sides of a pharmacy wall, one side inside the pharmacy being configured for loading prescriptions into the automated prescription dispensing system, and another side being configured for dispensing the filled prescription to the public on the opposing side of the pharmacy wall; and

dispensing the filled prescription to a customer outside the pharmacy wall in response to information input by a person;

wherein the method further comprises requiring multiple pieces of information associated with a patient and verifying at least one of patient information and prescription information with the person prior to dispensing the filled prescription.

82. (Currently Amended) A method for dispensing filled prescriptions, the method comprising:

filling a prescription by preparing a container of medication with a label bearing patient information;

loading the filled prescription into an automated prescription dispensing system disposed so as to be accessible from both sides of a pharmacy wall, one side inside the pharmacy being configured for loading prescriptions into the automated prescription dispensing system, and another side being configured for dispensing the filled prescription to the public on the opposing side of the pharmacy wall; and

dispensing the filled prescription to a customer outside the pharmacy wall in response to information input by a person;

wherein the method comprises scanning information about the filled prescription and sending the information to a control unit.

83. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 82, wherein the method further comprises utilizing the scanned information to determine the location of the filled prescription within the automated prescription dispensing system.

84. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 81, wherein the method comprises utilizing information input by the customer into a control unit and dispensing the filled prescription to the person when adequate information has been received to verify that the customer has authorization to pick-up the filled prescription.

85. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 81, wherein the method comprises placing the filled prescription in a medication holding receptacle and correlating which medication holding receptacle holds the filled prescription with information correlated with the patient.

86. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 85, wherein the method comprises using a sensor to determine if a filled prescription is in a medication holding receptacle.

87. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 81, wherein the method comprises selectively closing at least one door on the side of the automated prescription dispensing system in which filled prescriptions are loaded to selectively limit access to the filled prescriptions.

88. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 87, wherein the method comprises providing a plurality of doors disposed adjacent medication holding receptacles and where the doors selectively inhibit dispensing filled prescriptions from the medication holding receptacles.

89. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 81, wherein the method comprises disposing a plurality of filled prescriptions in a single medication holding receptacle.

90. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 89, wherein the method comprises dispensing the plurality of filled prescriptions in response to information input by a customer and associated with a patient.

91. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 81, wherein the method comprises removing at least one filled prescription from at least one medication holding receptacle and dropping the filled prescription into a trough from which it can be retrieved by a customer in response to information input by a customer.

92. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 81, wherein the method further comprises charging the customer for the filled prescription prior to dispensing the filled prescription.

93. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 81, wherein the method further comprises billing a third party for at least a portion of the cost of a prescription once the prescription has been dispensed.

94. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 81, wherein a plurality of filled prescriptions are disposed in the automated prescription dispensing system, and wherein the filled prescriptions which have not been dispensed are periodically removed from the automated prescription dispensing system by pharmacy personnel.

95. (Previously Presented) A method for dispensing a prescription, the method comprising:

filling a prescription by preparing a container of medication having a patient's name and other prescription information thereon by pharmacy personnel;

pharmacy personnel placing the filled prescription in a medication holding receptacle of

a prescription dispensing system having a medication holding area with a plurality of medication holding receptacles;

electronically scanning the prescription to thereby store information about the prescription in an electronic control portion of the prescription dispensing system;

correlating the location of the filled prescription with the information about the filled prescription;

dispensing the filled prescription directly to a customer after the customer inputs information correlated to at least one of the prescription and patient to verify that the customer is authorized to receive the prescription.

96. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 95, wherein the method comprises charging the customer prior to dispensing the filled prescription.

97. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 95, wherein the method comprises disposing the prescription dispensing system so that a loading side is disposed on a side of a pharmacy wall accessible to pharmacy personnel, and a dispensing side is disposed where it is accessible to customers.

98. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 95, wherein the method comprises loading filled prescriptions into the prescription dispensing system on a side opposite the side accessible to customers.

99. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 95, wherein the method further comprises releasing the prescription from the receptacle so as to allow the customer to retrieve the prescription.

100. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 99, wherein the prescription dispensing system further comprises a plurality of dispensing doors corresponding to the plurality of receptacles, and wherein the method further comprises selectively actuating one of the plurality of dispensing doors to dispense a filled prescription in response to input by a customer.

101. (Previously Presented) A method for dispensing prescription medication comprising:

transmitting a plurality of prescriptions for a plurality of patients to a pharmacy;
filling the plurality of prescriptions by preparing containers of medication having information specific to a patient disposed thereon;

utilizing an automated prescription dispensing machine located in a pharmacy which is accessible to a pharmacist for loading prescriptions into the dispensing machine and accessible to the public for dispensing prescriptions from the dispensing machine, the prescription dispensing machine comprising a plurality of prescription receiving structures, a control portion, and a customer or patient interface;

entering information regarding each of the plurality of patients into the control portion, the information being sufficient to identify each of the plurality of patients;

loading the plurality of prescriptions into the dispensing machine by disposing the prescriptions on or in the plurality of prescription receiving structures;

correlating the location of each of the prescriptions to the identity of the patient corresponding to the prescription;

allowing a customer to enter information associated with a filled prescription or patient into the computer controller via the customer or patient interface;

confirming that a prescription for the patient is loaded into the dispensing machine;

receiving payment from the patient for the prescription; and

dispensing the prescription to the patient by moving the prescription from the prescription receiving structure and dropping the prescription into a dispensing trough separate from the prescription receiving structure.

102. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 101, wherein the method further comprises selecting a dispensing machine having a plurality of dispensing doors associated with the plurality of prescription receiving structures, and wherein the method further comprises dispensing a prescription to a patient by selectively actuating one of the plurality of dispensing doors.

103. (Previously Presented) A method for providing a prescription to a patient comprising:

transmitting the prescription to a pharmacy;

having a pharmacist fill the prescription by preparing container of medication having information specific to the patient;

utilizing an automated dispenser, the dispenser being located at least partially in the pharmacy and having a plurality of prescription receiving structures for holding a plurality of prescriptions, and configured for allowing the patient to receive the prescription without interaction with the pharmacist;

having the pharmacy staff load the prescription into the dispenser by placing the prescription on or in one of the plurality of prescription receiving structures;

sensing the prescription via sensors integral to the automated dispenser to verify the location of the prescription;

associating the location of the prescription with the identity of the patient in a dispenser controller;

allowing a customer to enter information into the dispenser associated with a filled prescription; and

dispensing the prescription to the customer.

104. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 103, wherein the dispenser is located in the wall of the pharmacy.

105. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 103, wherein the method further comprises:

having the pharmacist fill a plurality of prescriptions for a plurality of patients;

loading the plurality of prescriptions into the dispenser by placing the plurality of prescriptions on or in the plurality of prescription receiving structures;

associating each of the plurality of prescriptions with the identity of the patient corresponding to each of the plurality of prescriptions;

dispensing one of the plurality of prescriptions in response to a customer entering sufficient information into the dispenser to identify a patient.

106. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 61, wherein the method further comprises dispensing a plurality of filled prescriptions to a plurality of different customers.

107. (Previously Presented) A method for dispensing prescription medication comprising:

loading a filled prescription comprising a container of medication bearing information specific to a patient into one of a plurality of receiving structures of an automated prescription dispenser, the dispenser being located in a pharmacy so as to be accessible to pharmacy personnel and to pharmacy customers;

sensing the prescription with an electronic sensor to verify the location of the prescription;

receiving, from a customer, identifying information through a control portion of the dispenser information that is sufficient to confirm the identity of the customer;

requiring the customer to enter multiple pieces of information to confirm the identity of the patient and/or prescription;

the dispenser verifying the prescription with the customer; and

dispensing the prescription from automated prescription dispenser to the customer after verification of the prescription.

108. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 107, wherein sensing the prescription with an electronic sensor comprises automatically sensing the prescription within the automated prescription dispenser to verify location.

109. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 107, wherein the method further comprises moving the prescription from the receiving structure to a separate dispensing structure to dispense the prescription to the customer.

110. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 107, wherein sensing the prescription with an electronic sensor comprises scanning the prescription before or during loading to enter information about the prescription into the control portion of the dispenser.

111. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 107, wherein sensing the prescription with an electronic sensor comprises utilizing the sensor to determine if a filled prescription is in a receiving structure.

112. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 107, wherein the method further comprises the dispenser automatically billing a third party for at least a portion of the cost of the prescription.